

# TAKING CARE OF YOU!

How not to have  
**Sexually  
Transmitted  
Diseases**  
in your life

*Give your self a pat on the back for the steps you are taking toward "taking care of you." You probably have a lot on your mind right now but we would like to offer you some information that could save your life or end some worry. This information concerns Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) and how not to have them in your life.*



**The Native American Women's Health Education Resource Center has an ongoing health project aimed at providing women like yourself with health information. Part of this health information concerns STDs including AIDS. We do not judge anyone, but we do provide ways for women to determine their own risks and link them up with services available: testing, counseling and health care. The information provided in this pamphlet answers questions that women in South Dakota are asking. If you have further questions after reading this pamphlet, we can provide someone to talk with you about your concerns.**



# **1. What are STDs?**

STDs stands for **Sexually Transmitted Diseases**. They are diseases you can get from having sex with another person.

In the past STDs were called VD (Venereal Diseases). The most common STDs are:

**Syphilis**

**Chlamydia**

**Candidiasis**

**Herpes**

**Gonorrhea**

**Trichomoniasis**

**Genital Warts**

**AIDS**

(TURN OVER)

***PLEASE READ EACH CARD.***



## **2. How to tell if you have and STD.**

### **Look for symptoms**

STDs have distinct symptoms or signs, but sometimes STDs are asymptomatic. That means there are no noticeable or outward symptoms whatsoever. Not having symptoms does not mean you do not have an STD. You can have an STD without knowing it. Remember, a medical exam is the best determination of an STD.

### **Look at risks**

#### **Q. Do you practice Safer Sex?**

(Safer Sex is using condoms as barriers between your skin and body fluid and another person's skin and body fluid.)

**A.** If you answered no and are still having sex, then consider yourself at risk. If you answered yes, then you have reduced your risk considerably for STDs.

(TURN OVER)



### **3. What about your partner?**

Let's say you answered the questions about yourself and you feel your risk is minimal. You also must consider the risk of your partner.

#### **CONSIDER THESE:**

You can not always tell if a man has an STD or if he is high risk by looking at him. Remember that some STDs (including the AIDS Virus) **DO NOT ALWAYS HAVE VISIBLE SYMPTOMS.**

You could talk to your partner about his risk. However, it is sometimes just as hard to start a conversation about risks and past sexual history with an old partner as with a new one. Also, talking with your old partner might mean that you are relying on the judgement of someone who might not even know he has a STD. Furthermore, he might not want to be honest because of some past sexual experiences.

**The best protection for women is abstinence or insisting on safer sex.**





## **4. Are you at risk? What is your next step?**

**For STDs other than the AIDS virus:** For the majority of STDs diagnosis is done through examination and/or a tissue culture. **Syphilis** testing is done through a blood test. Fourteen days from the time of contact must elapse for the diagnosis of STDs other than the AIDS virus to be accurate. STDs won't go away unless they are medically treated. You can have several STDs at the same time. In fact, because of lesions (open wounds) that an STD may cause in your vagina or anal canal, you can get another STD at the same time.

**IF YOU ARE PREGNANT, DON'T LET  
AN STD "DOUBLE" ITS DAMAGE!**

STDs are treatable even when you are pregnant. It is doubly important to be diagnosed and treated when you are pregnant because the STD can affect you **AND YOUR BABY!!**



## 5. What about testing for the AIDS virus?

Blood must be drawn because this is a test for antibodies to a virus. These antibodies are produced by white blood cells in the blood. Antibodies are what your body uses to fight infections. It may take two to three months after a person becomes infected for the body to build up enough antibodies to test.

There are two types of testing sites for the AIDS virus in South Dakota.

**1) STATE SITES.** The advantage to state sites is that they are free, confidential, and open to the everyone. A disadvantage might be the traveling distance to Aberdeen, Sioux Falls, Pierre, or Rapid City where four sites are located. If you can get to one of these sites, remember that you must plan a second trip three weeks later to get your results in person. Results can not be given by phone.

**2) IHS SITES.** Your blood can be drawn from your local Indian Health Service clinic. However, there are disadvantages. One disadvantage could again be the distance to the clinic, especially if you are temporarily away from an IHS service area.

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## **6. If you have ever been raped . . .**

there is a possibility that you came into contact with an STD.

Because of the violent nature of rape and probable lack of proper lubricants, there is a chance that lesions (open wounds) were made in the vagina, anus or mouth.

Viruses, such as the AIDS virus, can pass through lesions into a woman's bloodstream. For this reason, when you are being examined by a doctor after being raped, she is likely to take cultures (tests) for STDs. However, this test will only tell if you had an STD prior to the rape. If you did get an STD from the rape, it would take fourteen days after the rape for the test to show positive. You have two options:

1) You can get treatment for all STDs immediately;  
or

2) You can wait fourteen days and then go in again for another exam.

Please discuss your options with a medical professional.

(TURN OVER)



## 7. What about birth control?

Birth control and STD preventions are not the same thing.

Birth control methods prevent a man's sperm from coming in contact with a female's egg. Safer sex methods prevent a man's bodily fluids (semen, blood, urine, feces) from contacting (touching) your bodily fluids.

*Please compare the following birth control methods for their STD prevention:*

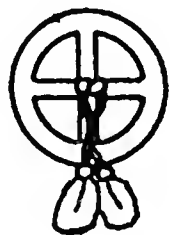
BIRTH CONTROL METHOD	STD PREVENTION	HIV PREVENTION
Abstinence	total	some*
<b>condoms</b>	<b>BEST</b>	<b>BEST</b>
Diaphragm	some	little
cervical cap	some	little
sponge	little	none
The Pill	none	none
abortion	none	none

\*You are not totally protected from the HIV if you abstain from sex. It is still possible to get the virus from the blood contact (such as IV drug use).

**PROPER USE OF CONDOMS OFFERS THE BEST PROTECTION AGAINST AIDS!**

**LOOKING  
TOWARD  
THE  
FUTURE.**

**STDs  
ARE  
PREVENTABLE.**



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